



British Columbia & Washington State

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON COASTAL CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION



June 20, 2008

Whereas, climate change is a serious concern for the people, the economies and the environment of the province of British Columbia and the state of Washington; and

Whereas, our governments are committed to leading the way in responding to the challenge of climate change by setting binding emissions reduction levels, working in partnership through the Western Climate Initiative to develop a regional market-based response, adopting the California tailpipe emission standards, pursuing a range of province and state-specific complementary policies to reduce emissions, and creating new jobs and opportunities in a greener, lower carbon economy; and

Whereas, we share a common coastline that is hundreds of miles long, densely populated urban centers and pristine wilderness, all vulnerable to changes in sea levels and storm surges driven by climate change, and requiring strategies to adapt to a different climate regime; and

Whereas, adapting to unavoidable climate change impacts will require first-rate scientific information, long term planning and effective communication with our coastal communities; and

Therefore, province of British Columbia and the state of Washington commit to further joint action by our governments on climate change adaptation and mitigation as follows:

1. Share data and research around the regional impacts of climate change, particularly sea level information.

The affect of global sea level rise associated with climate change varies significantly along the BC and Washington coast due to complex variations in vertical land movement. Some areas are experiencing a drop in sea level, other areas are experiencing rates greater than the global trend. Shorter term extreme sea level events associated with storms and other oceanographic conditions, some of which may be influenced by climate change, are what causes the most damage. The science of understanding and projecting sea level trends and extreme events at the regional scale is complex and will benefit from the sharing of data and research among several disciplines and agencies along the Pacific Coast of North America.

2. Collaborate on the development of scenarios for projected sea level changes for our common Pacific coastline, based on best case, mid-case and worst case climate impacts.

Developing scenarios for projected sea level rise rates at the regional scale requires consideration of very large uncertainties associated with observations and model results. Furthermore, sea level projections will be subject to change as the science improves. Communities, business and coastal resource managers who must make decisions based to sea level projections will benefit from collaboration and some consistency in interpretation.

3. Collaborate on the development of communication and outreach initiatives to engage potentially affected coastal communities to build capacity to adapt.

Transmitting complex science to communities is challenging and can benefit from sharing experiences and approaches. Potentially, outreach materials can be shared among agencies as well.

4. Best practices on policy development, policy options and implementation of actions to protect our coastal communities and resources.

Sea level rise is expected to continue for centuries even if significant reductions in GHG emissions are achieved. This will present an unprecedented challenge to coastal zone management policies and expectations of coastal property/lease owners. To maximize the capacity of various levels of government to cope with this challenge best practices need to be shared among British Columbia and Washington jurisdictions.

5. Implementation

The actions set out in the Memorandum are to commence as soon as practicable. British Columbia's Ministry of Environment and Washington's Department of Ecology will work together and with other appropriate ministries and departments to sequence action so that communication efforts flow from solid data and analysis.

AGREED as to form and content and signed and dated in two (2) duplicate originals in Kelowna, British Columbia, this 20th day of June, 2008.

HONOURABLE GORDON CAMPBELL
Premier
Province of British Columbia

HONORABLE JAY MANNING
Director of Ecology
State of Washington